

Key Changes in the Horizon Europe 2026–2027 Work Programme

1. Fewer Topics, Bigger Ambitions

- The number of call topics has been reduced by 35% in order to decrease fragmentation.
- Topic descriptions are shorter and less prescriptive.
- Applicants have greater flexibility, but also greater responsibility to demonstrate alignment with EU priorities and to clearly articulate impact.

2. Introduction of Horizontal Calls

One of the most significant innovations of the Work Programme is the introduction of cross-cluster Horizontal Calls focusing on two key areas:

- **Clean Industrial Deal** – Decarbonisation of energy-intensive industries
- **AI in Science** – Development of trustworthy and responsible AI tools

These calls require a strongly interdisciplinary approach and are built on collaboration across multiple sectors.

3. Implementation and Procedural Changes

3.1 Lump-Sum Funding Becomes Mainstream

Approximately 50% of the total budget will be implemented through lump-sum funding schemes.

Practical implications:

- Payments are linked to the completion of Work Packages (WPs).
- If a WP is not completed, interim payments may be withheld.
- There is no detailed cost reporting and no financial audit.

While this reduces administrative burden, it significantly increases:

- the importance of realistic work planning,
- the importance of clearly defined deliverables.

3.2 Shorter and Simplified Proposal Templates

Reduced page limits:

- Research and Innovation Action (RIA) & Innovation Action (IA): 40 pages (45 pages for lump-sum topics)
- Coordination and Support Action (CSA): 25 pages (28 pages for lump-sum CSAs)

3.3 Guidelines on the Use of Generative AI

For the first time, official guidance has been issued on the use of generative AI tools in proposal preparation. [Living guideline on the responsible use of Generative AI in research](#)

Key principles:

- Transparent disclosure of AI usage
- Full applicant responsibility for all content
- Avoidance of uploading sensitive data to external AI systems

AI may serve as a supporting tool, but it does not replace professional responsibility.

3.4 Two-factor authentication will become mandatory on the Funding & Tenders Portal

From the first quarter of 2026, two-factor authentication (2FA) will be required because data related to proposals, contracts, and expert profiles fall under the “sensitive, non-classified” category, and simple password protection is no longer considered sufficiently secure. 2FA will apply to every user who has access to such information, including LEARs, financial and legal signatories, coordinators, participant contacts, and experts.

The second factor can take several forms, such as the EU Login mobile app, eID, a USB security key, a Trusted Platform Module, or a passkey. Users are encouraged to register multiple second factors, account sharing is prohibited, and after the 2025–2026 pilot period, 2FA will become mandatory for all affected users. A detailed guide is available [here](#).

4. Changes in Participation Rules

The 2026–2027 Work Programme introduces important modifications concerning the participation of certain countries and entities.

The programme restricts the participation of **legal entities established in China or controlled by Chinese entities** in **Innovation Actions (IA)** and – as a general rule – in **Research and Innovation Actions (RIA)** due to concerns related to intellectual property transfer, technology leakage, and broader geopolitical risks.

- They are **not eligible to participate in Innovation Action (IA)** projects.
- They are excluded from several strategic technology areas, including **artificial intelligence, telecommunications/5G, semiconductors, biotechnology, quantum technologies, and health**.

- In **RIA projects**, participation is only allowed in specifically defined areas (e.g., certain clusters, missions, and the New European Bauhaus).
- Universities affiliated with China's **MIIT (Ministry of Industry and Information Technology)** are fully excluded.
- In sensitive innovation calls, even **EU-based entities under Chinese control** may be deemed ineligible.

These measures aim to safeguard strategic technologies and intellectual property, and to mitigate geopolitical risks.

At the same time, the programme opens further to other international partners:

- **Switzerland, Canada and South Korea** participate as associated countries (the latter two in Pillar 2 global challenges and industrial competitiveness)
- **Japan and Egypt** are connected to the programme under transitional arrangements.

If you have any questions or are planning to participate in a proposal, please contact the colleagues of the Centre for Grant and Project Management at **ergo@uni-corvinus.hu**.